

The C.I.A. Case

Controversy Boils Over Its Role

In Washington last week, reporters jostled each other at the Foundation Library Center, the Rayburn House Office Building and the Internal Revenue Service as they pored over the internal revenue forms 990-A of a variety of foundations. Up in Boston, in the office of the State Attorney General, other reporters were going through a similar process.

The 990-A forms are reports to the I.R.S. on certain receipts, disbursements and assets of certain foundations; because of the complexities of the law, they are available to the press in a variety of places.

From all this hectic research there emerged a steadily enlarged picture of the subsidies that the Central Intelligence Agency had paid to educational and research organizations, to youth and student groups, to the international departments of trade unions and universities. In most instances the money had been channeled first to "front" foundations—the Borden Trust, the Beacon Fund, the Price Fund, the San Miguel Fund—set up for the purpose by the C.I.A., thence to a legitimate foundation, and finally to the recipient organization engaged in overseas activities or international research.

The whole issue of the C.I.A. generated sharp controversy. Ranking members of the Armed Services Committees of both houses of Congress who have comprised the so-called watchdog committees of the C.I.A. stanchily defended it. But others on Capitol Hill, who have long demanded closer scrutiny and control of the agency, called for an inquiry. And there were high officials within the Johnson Administration itself who did not brush off the revelations lightly.

Vice President Humphrey, in answer to a student's question at Stanford University, said last Monday, "I'm not at all happy about what the C.I.A. is doing," and added that "This is one of the saddest times our Government has had in terms of public policy."

The same day, John W. Gardner, Secretary of Health, Education and Welfare, said that a secret intelligence agency was a necessity, but "it was a mistake for the C.I.A. ever to entangle itself in covert activities close to the field of education or scholarship or the universities."

Mr. Gardner's criticism had great impact because he is one of the three-member panel directed by President Johnson to look into the question of C.I.A. subsidies to private organizations. The other two members are C.I.A. Director Richard Helms and Nicholas deB. Katzenbach, the Under Secretary of State who is serving as panel chairman.

Mr. Helms made no public statements. But after he had reported on Tuesday to the Senate watchdog committee, Senator Richard B. Russell told reporters the agency

would end its aid to many private organizations.

As for Mr. Katzenbach, he wrote a letter Thursday to President Johnson, praising the C.I.A. and noting that the panel's inquiry would be completed "in the very near future." The White House quickly endorsed the letter, which said in part:

"It is vitally important that the current controversy over its [the agency's] support of certain private organizations not be permitted to obscure the value, or impede the effectiveness, of competent and dedicated public officials serving this country."

On Friday, Senate Majority Leader Mike Mansfield, who has long advocated a select joint committee to oversee the C.I.A., said he did not now favor a Congressional inquiry.

Everett McKinley Dirksen, the Senate Republican leader, said the furor over the C.I.A. amounted to "little more than a Roman holiday."

From the week's turmoil, then, two conclusions could be safely drawn.

First, the Administration wants to close out the controversy without Congressional inquiry and many members of Congress seemed inclined to go along; the general attitude was that the issue contained no political profit and could contain political dynamite for anyone who got entangled.

Second, the Administration is going to abolish much of the secret subsidy program that provoked the controversy.

Issue Now Is How to Control It

Some of the official statements in the C.I.A. controversy last week—notably those of Vice President Humphrey and Secretary Gardner—went to the heart of the issue, namely, whether the academic community should be in the clandestine pay of the intelligence community even if, as some organizations and scholars insisted, the C.I.A. made no attempt to fetter either their minds or their activities.

But other official statements aimed at justifying the C.I.A. subsidies and extricating it from responsibility tended to confuse the issue. Such was the statement of Senator Robert Kennedy that it was unfair to make the C.I.A. "take the rap" for the financing of private organizations when the basic policy decisions had been made by four Presidents after approval by "all relevant agencies."

This was the point stressed in the five-paragraph preliminary "report" to the President by Secretary Katzenbach. The C.I.A., he wrote, "did not act on its own initiative but in accordance with national policies established by the National Security Council in 1952 through 1954," and "throughout it acted with the approval of

senior inter-departmental review committees, including the Secretaries of State and Defense or their representatives."

This was something less than the full story. It is true, for example, that President Kennedy and the N.S.C. were ultimately responsible for the disastrous Bay of Pigs invasion of Cuba in 1961. But it is also true that the whole scheme was hatched in the operations division of the C.I.A.

Similarly, four Presidents had responsibility — though probably not in equal degree—for the secret subsidizing of many educational, professional, student and charitable organizations working overseas. But it is highly probable that most of the initiative for using these organizations came from the C.I.A.

Thus, the problem with the Kennedy and Katzenbach statements is that, while they fasten the ultimate responsibility, they do not deal with the basic question of supervision and control of the C.I.A. If one thing emerges clearly from the disclosures of the past fortnight, it is that the controls—at least over this area—did not work.

What are the controls?

First, there is self-control—a continuous self-scrutiny that presumably should be exercised by the agency itself, and particularly its director. Circumstances all cases, and much can be said—defense of the decision to subsidize various organizations with hidden C.I.A. funds back in 1952 when the Cold War was very cold—the Communists were making all-out effort to capture your groups and trade unions in emerging and politically naive nations. In the past three years, following the Cuban missile crisis, the growing independence of the Communist regimes of Eastern Europe and the ideological warfare

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